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BACK THERE IN '58*

BY IDA M. TARBELL

AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE OF LINCOLN," "THE HISTORY OF THE STANDARD OIL COMPANY," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAY HAMBIDGE



HEAR 'em? Hear the Lincoln and Douglas debates? Well, I should say I did. Heard every one of 'em. Yes, sir, for about two months back there in '58, I didn't do a thing but travel around Illinois listenin' to them two men argue out slavery; and when I wa'n't listenin' to 'em or travelin' around after 'em, I was pretty sure to be settin' on a fence discussin'. Fur my part I never did understand how the crops was got in that fall; seemed to me about all the men in the state was settin' around whittlin' and discussin'.

Made Lincoln? Yes, I reckon you might say they did. There's no denyin' that's when the country outside begun to take notice of him. But don't you make no mistake, them debates wa'n't the beginnin' of Abraham Lincoln's work on slavery. He'd been at it for about four years before they came off, sweatin' his brains night and day. The hardest piece of thinkin' I ever see a man do. Anybody that wants to hear about him back there needn't expect stories. He wa'n't tellin' stories them days. No, sir, he was thinkin'.

Curious about him. There he was,

more'n forty-five years old, clean out of politics and settled down to practice law. Looked as if he wouldn't do much of anything the rest of his life but jog around the circuit, when all of a suddint Douglas sprung his Kansas-Nebraska bill. You remember what that bill was, don't you—let Kansas and Nebraska in as territories and the same time repealed the Missouri Compromise keeping slavery out of that part of the country, let the people have it or not, just as they wanted. You ain't no idee how that bill stirred up Mr. Lincoln. I'll never forgit how he took its passin'. 'Twas long back in the spring of '54. Lot of 'em was settin' in here tellin' stories and Mr. Lincoln was right in the middle of one when in bounced Billy Herndon—he was Lincoln's law partner, you know. His eyes was blazin' and he calls out, "They've done it, boys. They've done it. They've upset the Missouri Compromise. The Kansas-Nebraska bill is passed."

For a minute everybody was still as death—everybody but me. "Hoorah!" I calls out, "you can bet on Little Dug every time," for I was a Democrat and, barrin' George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, I thought Douglas was the biggest man God ever made. Didn't know no more what that bill meant than that old Tom-cat in the window.

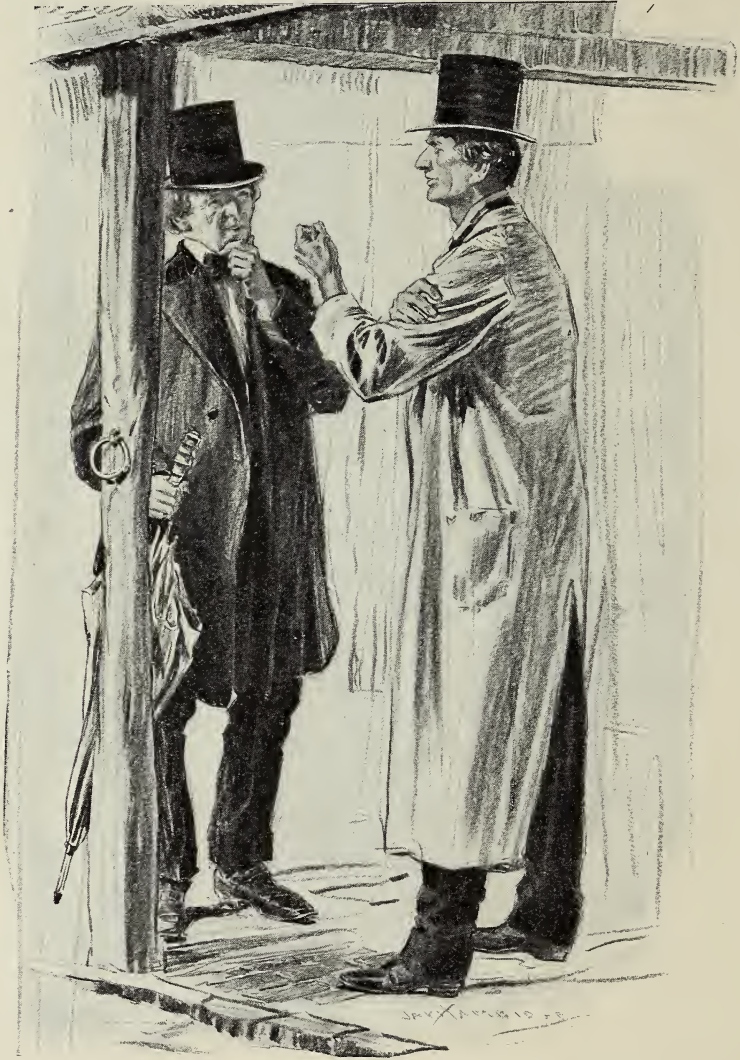
"Hoorah!" I says, and then I happened to look at Mr. Lincoln.

*The first story in this series by Miss Tarbell, "He Knew Lincoln," appeared in THE AMERICAN MAGAZINE for February, 1907. Others will be published in the magazine in 1908.

He was all in a heap, his head dropped down on his breast, and there he set and never spoke, and then after a long time he got up and went out. Never finished that story, never said "Good-by, boys," like he

sas-Nebraska wa'n't nuthin' but politics, and my man had beat.

I told Ma about it when I got home. "It ain't like him to be mad because Douglas has beat," I says, "I don't under-



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always did, never took notice of nuthin', just went out, his face gray and stern, and his eyes not seein' at all.

Well, sir, you could a knocked me over with a feather. I never seen him take anything that way before. He was a good loser. You see how 'twas with me, Kan-

stand it," and Ma says, "I reckon that's just it, William, you *don't* understand it." Ma was awful touchy when anybody seemed to criticise Mr. Lincoln.

I s'pose you're too young to recollect what a fuss that bill stirred up, ain't you? Must 'a' heard your Pa talk about it,

though. Whole North got to rowin' about it. Out here in Illinois lots of Democrats left the party on account of it, and when Douglas came back that summer they hooted him off a platform up to Chicago. You couldn't stop Douglas that way. That just stirred up his blood.

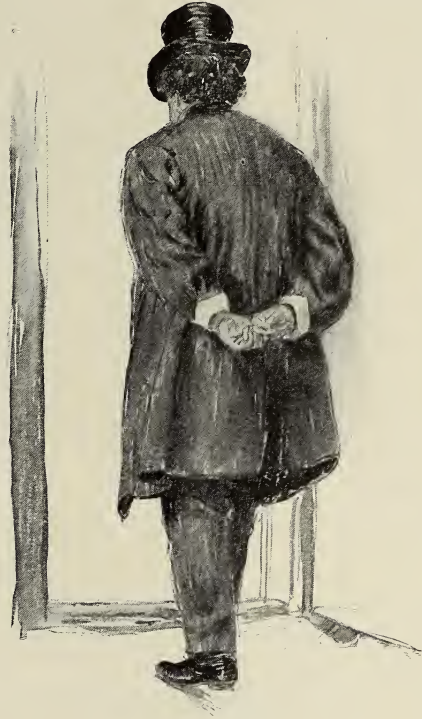
Far's I was concerned I couldn't see anything the matter with what he'd done. It seemed all right to me them days to let the folks that moved into Kansas and Nebraska do as Douglas had fixed it for 'em, have slaves or not, just as they was a mind to. And I tell you, when Douglas came around here and talked about "popular sovereignty," and rolled out his big sentences about the sacred right of self-government, and said that if the white people in Nebraska was good enough to govern themselves, they was good enough to govern niggers, I felt dead sure there wa'n't no other side to it.

What bothered me was the way Mr. Lincoln kept on takin' it. He got so he wa'n't the same, 'peared to be in a brown study all the time. Come in here and set by the stove with the boys and not talk at all. Didn't seem to relish my yarns either like he used to. He started in campaigning again, right away, and the boys said he wouldn't promise to go any place where they didn't let him speak against the Kansas-Nebraska bill. I heard him down here that fall—his first big speech. I hadn't never had any idee what was in Abraham Lincoln before. He wa'n't the same man at all. Serious—you wouldn't believe it, seemed to feel plumb bad about repealin' the Missouri Compromise, said 'twas wrong, just as wrong as 'twould be to repeal the law against bringin' in slaves from Africa. I must say I hadn't thought of that before.

I remember some of the things he said about Douglas' idee of popular sovereignty, just as well as if 'twas yesterday. "When the white man governs himself," he said, "that is self-government; but when he governs himself and also governs another, that is more than self-government, that is despotism." "If the negro is a man, then my ancient faith teaches me that all men are created equal." "No man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent."

And he just lit into slavery that day. "I hate it," he said. "I hate it because

it is a monstrous injustice." Yes, sir, them's the very words he used way back there in '54. "I hate it because it makes the enemies of free institutions call us hypocrites, I hate it because it makes men criticise the Declaration of Independence, and say there ain't no right principle but self-interest." More'n one old abolitionist who heard that speech said that they hadn't no idee how bad slavery was or how wicked the Kansas-Nebraska bill was 'til then.



"LITTLE DUG"

As time went on, seemed as if he got more serious every day. Everybody got to noticin' how hard he was takin' it. I remember how Judge Dickey was in here one day and he says to me: "Billy, Mr. Lincoln is all used up over this Kansas-Nebraska business. If he don't stop worryin' so, he'll be sick. Why, t'other night up to Bloomington, four of us was sleepin' in the same room and Lincoln talked us all to sleep, and what do you think? I waked up about daylight and there he was settin' on the side of the bed with nuthin' on but his shirt, and when he



MR. LINCOLN WAS SETTIN' UP IN HIS ROOM AT THE HOTEL—Page 11

sees my eyes was open he sings out, 'I tell you, Judge, this country can't last much longer half-slave and half-free.' Bin thinkin' all night far's I know."

Now, sir, that was much as three years before Mr. Lincoln said them self-same words in a speech right in this town. Seems to me I can hear him now singin' it out shrill and far-soundin': "*A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half-slave and half-free. I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all the one thing or all the other.*" Them's his very words. It made me cold when I heard 'em. If we wa'n't goin' to git on half-slave and half-free like we'd always done, what was goin' to happen?

He hitched on another idee to this one about our becomin' all slave or all free, which bothered me considerable—that was,

that Douglas and Buchanan and the rest of the big Democrats was in a conspiracy to spread slavery all over the Union. He'd been sayin' right along that they didn't mind slavery spreadin', but now he came out flat-footed and said the things they'd been doin' in Congress and in the Supreme Court for a few years back showed that they was tryin' to legalize slavery in all the states, north and south, old and new. He said that the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and Judge Taney's decision that Congress couldn't keep slaves out of a territory—and the way Pierce and Buchanan had worked, fitted together like timbers for a house. "If you see a lot of timbers," he says, "all gotten out at different times and different places by Stephen, Franklin, Roger and James"—them was the names of Douglas, Pierce, Taney and Buchanan, you know—"and you find they fit into a frame for a house, you can't help

believing them men have been workin' on the same plan."

I tell you that speech riled his party. They said he oughtn't said it, if he did think it. It was too radical. They talked to him so much, tryin' to tone him down and to keep him from doin' it agin, that he flared up one day in here and he says, "Boys, if I had to take a pen and scratch out every speech I ever made, except one, this speech you don't like's the one I'd leave." And he says it with his head up, lookin' as proud as if he was a Senator.

Well, somehow, as time went on, just watchin' Mr. Lincoln so dead in earnest begun to make me feel queer. Before I knowed it, I was thinkin' myself. You wouldn't believe it, would you? *Me*, Billy Brown, *thinkin'*! And I got serious. Never'd been so but twict before in my

life—once at a revival and next time when I thought I wasn't goin' to git Ma. But I joined the church and Ma and me got married, and after that there didn't seem to be anything left to worry about.

And then this comes along, and I'll be blamed if it didn't git so I couldn't hear enough of it. Night after night, when they was in here discussin', every minute I wa'n't puttin' up something, I was listenin' to 'em.

And then I took to runnin' around to hear the speeches. I was up to Bloomington in '56, the time Lincoln went over to the Republicans. The old Whigs down here had been considerable worried for fear he would quit 'em, and I must say it worried me. I never'd had any use for a man who left his party. Couldn't understand it. Seemed to me then that 'twa'n't



"BILLY," HE SAYS, "I'D RUTHER HEAR YOU SAY THAT THAN ANYTHING ANYBODY
COULD SAY"—Page 12



"BILLY, YOU SUPPORTED MR. LINCOLN, DIDN'T YOU?"—Page 13

no better than gittin' a divorce from your wife. I've changed my views since about several things. Had to jump the party myself two or three times, and I've seen women— Well, all I've got to say is, that I ain't judgin' the man that gits a divorce from 'em.

As I was sayin', I was up to Bloomington that night. Nobody that didn't hear that speech ever knows what Abraham Lincoln could do. Lots of 'em will tell you he was homely. Seems to me sometimes that's about all some folks around here has to tell about Abraham Lincoln. "Yes, I

knowed him," they say. "He was the homeliest man in Sangamon County." Well, now, don't you make no mistake. The folks that don't tell you nuthin' but that never knowed Mr. Lincoln. Mebbe they'd seen him, but they never knowed him. He wa'n't homely. There's no denyin' he was long and lean, and he didn't always stand straight and he wasn't pertikeler about his clothes, but that night up to Bloomington in ten minutes after he struck that platform, I tell you he was the handsomest man I ever see.

He knew what he was doin' that night.

He knew he was cuttin' loose. He knew them old Whigs was goin' to have it in for him for doin' it, and he meant to show 'em he didn't care a red cent what they thought. He knew there was a lot of fools in that new party he was joinin'—the kind that's always takin' up with every new thing comes along to git something to orate about. He saw clear as day that if they got started right that night, he'd got to fire 'em up; and so he threw back his shoulders and lit in.

Good Lord! I never see anything like it. In ten minutes he was about eight feet tall; his face was white, his eyes was blazin' fire, and he was thunderin', "Kansas shall be free!" "Ballots, not bullets!" "We won't go out of the Union and you sha'n't!" Generally, when he was speakin', he was cool and quiet and things all fit together, and when you come away you was calm—but your head was workin'; but that time up to Bloomington he was like—what's that the Bible calls it?—"avengin' fire"—yes, sir, that's it, he was like "avengin' fire." I never knew exactly what did happen there. All I recollect is that at the beginnin' of that speech I was settin' in the back of the room, and when I come to I was hangin' on to the front of the platform. I recollect I looked up and seen Jo Medill standin' on the reporter's table lookin' foolish-like and heard him say: "Good Lord, boys, I ain't took a note!"

Fact was he'd stamped that audience, reporters and all. I've always thought that speech made the Republican party in Illinois. It melted 'em together. 'Twa'n't arguments they needed just then, it was meltin' together of what they'd heard.

Well, he went right on speakin' after that, must 'a' made forty or fifty speeches all over the State, for Frémont, and he got no end of invitations from Indiana and Iowa and Kansas and all around to come over and speak. Old Billy Herndon used to come in here and brag about it. You'd thought 'twas him was gittin' 'em. Always seemed to think he owned Lincoln anyway.

By the time the Republicans wanted a man for United States Senate Lincoln was first choice, easy enough, and the first thing anybody knew if he didn't up and challenge Douglas, who the Democrats was runnin', to seven debates—seven joint debates, they called 'em. You could 'a' knocked me over with a feather when I heard that. I

couldn't think of anybody I knew challengin' Mr. Douglas. It seemed impertinent, him bein' what I thought him. But I was glad they was goin' to thresh it out. You see I was feelin' mighty uncertain in my mind by this time. Somehow I couldn't seem to git around the p'int I'd been hearin' Mr. Lincoln make so much. However, I didn't have no idee but what Mr. Douglas would show clear enough where he was wrong. So when I heard about the debates, I says to Ma, "Johnnie can take care of the store, I'm goin' to hear 'em."

You ain't do idee how people was stirred up by the news. Seemed as if everybody in the state felt about as I did. Most everybody was pretty sober about it, too. There ain't no denyin' that there was a lot of Democrats just like me. What Mr. Lincoln had been sayin' for four years back had struck in and they was worried. Still I reckon the most of the Republicans was a blamed sight more uneasy than we was. They'd got so used to seein' Douglas git everything he went after, that they thought he'd be sure to lick Lincoln now. I heard 'em talkin' about it among themselves every now and then and sayin', "I wisht Lincoln hadn't done it. He ain't had experience like Douglas. Why, Douglas's been debatin' fer twelve years in the United States Senate with the biggest men in the country, and he's always come out ahead. Lincoln ain't got a show."

You needn't think Mr. Lincoln didn't know how they was talkin'. He never made no mistake about himself, Mr. Lincoln didn't. He knew he wa'n't a big gun like Douglas. I could see he was blue as a whetstone sometimes, thinkin' of the difference between 'em. "What's agin us in this campaign, boys," I heard him say one day, "is *me*. There ain't no use denyin' that Douglas has always been a big success and I've always been a flat failure. Everybody expects him to be president and always has and is actin' accordin'. Nobody's ever expected anything from me. I tell you we've got to run this campaign on principle. There ain't nuthin' in your candidate." And he looked so cast down I felt plumb sorry for him.

But you needn't think by that that he was shirkin' it—no, sir, not a mite. Spite of all his blues, he'd set his teeth for a fight. One day over to the Chenery House I

recollect standin' with two or three Republicans when Mr. Lincoln come along and stopped to shake hands with a chap from up to Danville. "How's things lookin' up your way, Judge," he says.

"Well, Mr. Lincoln," the Judge says, "we're feelin' mighty anxious about this debate of yourn with Douglas," and the way he said it I could 'a' kicked him.

Mr. Lincoln looked at him mighty sober for a minute. "Judge," he says, "didn't you ever see two men gittin' ready for a fight? Ain't you seen one of 'em swell up his muscle and pat it and brag how he's goin' to knock the stuffin' out of the other, and that other man clinchin' his fist and settin' his teeth and savin' his wind. Well, sir, the other is goin' to win the fight or die tryin'," and with that he turns and goes off.

Didn't I know that's the way he felt. I hadn't been watchin' him sweatin' his brains on that darned question for four years without knowin'. I tell you nobody that didn't see him often them days, and didn't care enough about him to feel bad when he felt bad, can ever understand what Abraham Lincoln went through before his debates with Douglas. He worked his head day and night tryin' to git that slavery question figured out so nobody could stump him. Greatest man to think things out so nobody could git around him I ever see. Hadn't any patience with what wa'n't clear. What worried him most, I can see now, was makin' the rest of us understand it like he did.

Well, as I was sayin', it seemed as if all Illinois turned out to hear 'em speak. A country fair wa'n't nuthin' to the crowds. There wa'n't any too many railroads in Illinois in '58, and they didn't select the places for the debates accordin' to connections. I reckon I traveled about all the ways there be gettin' to the places: foot, horseback, canal-boat, stage, side-wheeler, just got around any way that come handy; et and slept the same. Up to Quincy I recollect I put up on the bluff, and over to Charlestown me and seven of the boys had two beds. Nobody seemed to mind. We was all too took up with the speeches, seemed as if the more you heard the more you wanted to hear. I tell you they don't have no such speeches nowadays. There ain't two men in the United States to-day could git the crowds them two men had or hold 'em if they got 'em.

I sort of expected some new line of argument from Douglas when they started out, but 'twa'n't long before we all saw he wa'n't goin' to talk about anything but popular sovereignty—that is, if he could help himself. As it turned out he didn't git his way. Mr. Lincoln had made up his mind that the Judge had got to say whether he thought slavery was right or wrong. Accordin' to him, that was the issue of the campaign. He argued that Douglas' notion of popular sovereignty was all right if slavery was as good as freedom, but that if it wa'n't, his arguments wa'n't worth a rush. He said the difference between him and the Judge was that one thought slavery was wrong and ought to be kept where it was till it died out of itself, and the other thought it was right and ought to be spread all over the country.

It made Little Dug awful mad to face that line of argument. He said such talk proved Lincoln was an abolitionist, and as for his bein' in a conspiracy to spread slavery it was a lie, "an infamous lie." Well, I always did think conspiracy was a pretty strong word for Lincoln to use. Strictly speakin', I reckon 'twa'n't one, but all the same it didn't look right. Douglas couldn't deny that when he got the Missouri Compromise repealed he let slavery into territory that the government had set aside to be free. He couldn't deny that Judge Taney had decided that Congress couldn't prevent people takin' slaves into this territory. There was some other things which fitted in with these which Douglas couldn't deny.

Mr. Lincoln argued from what they'd done that there wa'n't any reason why they shouldn't go on and apply the same legislation to all the other free parts of the country, said he believed they would in time if they thought it would pay better.

The more I heard 'em argue the more I felt Lincoln was right. Suppose, I says to myself, that they take it into their heads to open Illinois? What's to stop 'em? If slaves can be took into Nebraska by the divine right of self-government, what's to prevent the divine right of self-government lettin' 'em in here? Of course, there was an old law settin' aside the Northwest to freedom, but if the Missouri Compromise could be repealed, why couldn't that? Then, again, what's to prevent the Supreme Court decidin' that Congress couldn't keep slaves

out of a state just as it had decided that Congress couldn't keep 'em out of a territory. The more I thought of it the more I see there wa'n't anything to prevent men like Douglas and Buchanan tryin' some day to apply the same line of argument to Illinois or Pennsylvania or New York or any other free state that they was usin' now.

I wa'n't goin' to stand for that. I don't pretend I ever felt like Mr. Lincoln did about niggers. No, sir, I was a Democrat, and I wanted the South let alone. I didn't want to hear no abolition talk. But I was dead agin havin' any more slaves than we could help, and what's more I wa'n't myself willin' to live in a state where they was. I'd seen enough for that. Back in the '40's, when I first started up this store, I used to go to New Orleans for my goods and, bein' young, of course I had to see the sights. A man don't go to a slave market many times without gittin' to feel that as far as he is concerned he don't want nuthin' to do with buyin' and sellin' humans, black or white. Ma, too, she was dead set agin it, and she'd said many a time when I was talkin', "William, if Mr. Douglas don't really care whether we git to be all slave or not, you oughten to vote for him," and I'd always said I wouldn't. Still I couldn't believe at first but what he did care. By the time the debates was half through I seen it clear enough, though. He didn't care a red cent—said he didn't. There was lots of others seen it same as me. I heard more'n one old Democrat say, "Douglas don't care. Lincoln's got it right, we've got to keep slavery back now or it's going to spread all over the country."

You never would believe how I felt when I seen that, for that meant goin' back on Little Dug, leavin' the party and votin' for a Black Republican, as we used to call 'em. I tell you when I begun to see where I was goin' there wa'n't many nights I didn't lie awake tryin' to figure out how I could git around it. 'Twa'n't long, though, before I got over feelin' bad. Fact was every time I heard Mr. Lincoln—I used to go to all the speeches between debates, and there must have been twenty or thirty of them—he made it clearer. 'Twas amazin' how every time he always had some new way of puttin' it. Seemed as if his head was so full he couldn't say the same thing twict alike.

One thing that made it easier was that I begun to see that Douglas wa'n't thinkin' much of anything but gittin' elected and that Lincoln wa'n't thinkin' about that at all. He was dead set on makin' us understand. Lots of people seen that the first thing. I recollect how up to Quincy that funny fellow, what do you call him? "Nasby—Petroleum V. Nasby." Young chap then. Well, he'd come out there for some paper. Wanted to write Lincoln up. It was in the evening after the Debate and Mr. Lincoln was settin' up in his room at the hotel with his boots off and his feet on a chair—lettin' 'em breathe, he said. Had his coat and vest off. Nuthin' on to speak of but his pants and one suspender—settin' there restin' and gassin' with the boys when, as I started to say, Mr. Nasby come up. They had a long talk and I walked down street with him when he left.

"That Lincoln of yours is a great man," he says after a spell. "He ain't botherin' about the Senate—not a mite. He's tryin' to make the people of Illinois understand the danger there is in slavery spreadin' all over the country. He's a big man, the biggest man I've seen in a long time."

Well, that sounded good to me, for that was just about what I'd figured out by that time, that Lincoln was a big man, a bigger man than Stephen A. Douglas. Didn't seem possible to me it could be so, but the more I went over it in my mind the more certain I felt about it. Yes, sir, I'd figured it out at last what bein' big was, that it was bein' *right*, thinkin' things out straight and then hangin' on to 'em because they was right. That was bein' big, and that was Abraham Lincoln all through—the whole of him.

That wa'n't Douglas at all. He didn't care whether he thought right or not, if he got what he was after. There wa'n't no real truth in him. See what he did in the very first debate up to Ottawa. He started out up there by callin' Lincoln an abolitionist and sayin' he wanted a nigger wife, and to prove it read a lot of abolition resolutions which he said Lincoln had helped git up as far back as '54. The very next day after that debate, the Chicago *Tribune* came out and showed that Mr. Lincoln hadn't ever had anything to do with the resolutions Douglas had read. Yes, sir, them resolutions had come from some measly little abolition meetin' where Mr. Lincoln had

never been. Douglas had been tryin' to play a trick on us. I tell you when that news got out you could 'a' heard a pin drop among Illinois Democrats. It seemed as if he couldn't realize how serious we was feelin' or he wouldn't try a trick like that.

Then he was always diggin' in things which didn't have no bearin' on the case, and takin' up Lincoln's time makin' him answer 'em. One was a-tellin' how Lincoln had voted against givin' money to carry on the Mexican War. Now, I knew that wa'n't so, and more'n that it didn't have anything to do with the question. It made me feel plumb bad to have him goin' on that way.

And that's the way he kept it up. Always digressin', never takin' up a p'int till Lincoln had drove him into a corner, always insistin' Lincoln wanted a nigger wife. Why, he made so much of that fool lie that there was a lot of people got to thinkin' mebbe that's what Lincoln's idees did mean. There's a man livin' here in this town now that's got a little book Lincoln made for him to show around and to prove he didn't mean nuthin' of the kind.

Fact was, Douglas never meant to argue it out fair and square. He meant to dodge, to mix us up and keep our minds off Kansas-Nebraska and old Judge Taney, and all the things Lincoln made so much of. I recollect Lincoln said one day that the way Douglas acted reminded him of a cuttlefish, throwin' out a black ink to color up the water so he could git away from something that was chasin' him.

Of course what made Douglas seem worse was Lincoln bein' so fair and so dead in earnest. Sometimes it seemed as if he was givin' the whole case away, he was so honest with Douglas. But he knew what he was doin' every time. Lincoln was the kind that breaks to win. And serious, why he wouldn't take time to tell a story. I recollect sayin' to him one day, "Mr. Lincoln, why don't you make us laugh sometimes?" "This ain't no time for stories, Billy," he says, "it's too serious."

Felt bad because he wa'n't elected? Nope. Didn't expect him to be. Somehow I'd got to feelin' by the time election come that it didn't make no real difference whether he went to the Senate or not. His goin' there wa'n't goin' to settle the question. What was goin' to settle it was gettin' more people to feel as he did about it. If

he got beat tryin' to make people understand, it was worth a sight more to country than his gettin' elected dodgin' truth. I didn't figure that out alone, tho' it was Mr. Lincoln helped me to see it.

You see, after I'd made up my mind vote the Republican ticket, one day when I was walkin' down the street with some friends here in town and there wa'n't nobbly around I told him. He looks at me shifty like and then he says, mighty solemn, "Billy, are you sure you know what you're doin'? What's the reason you're leavin' party? 'Cause you want to see me git in?" "No, sir," I says, "that ain't it at all. I'm a Democrat. Besides, I hate like to be possessed to go back on 'Little Dug,' I know what store I've always set by him. The reason I'm votin' for you, Mr. Lincoln, is because you've got it right and nobbly can git around it. Douglas is wrong. There ain't nothin' else to do but vote your side, much as I hate to."

Well, sir, you never seen how he straightened up and how his eyes lit up like I'd seen 'em do when he was speakin'.

"Billy," he says, "I'd ruther hear you say that than anything anybody could say. That's what I've been tryin' to do—make people see it as I do. I believe I got it figured out right, Billy. I've been thinkin' it night and day for four years, and I can find no mistake in my line of argument. What I want is to make people understand."

"What bothers me, Mr. Lincoln," I says, "is that I don't believe you'll be elected, even if you are right," and then he sir, he throws back his head and just laughs right out loud. "Don't you worry, Billy, about that," he says, "that don't make no difference. I ain't sayin' I don't want to go to the United States Senate—I do! Always have. When I quit politics in '49 and made up my mind I wa'n't goin' to have another chance to go to Congress or be anybody, I was miserable. But that's all over. What's important now in this country is making people feel that slavery is wrong, that the South is bent on spreadin' it and that we've got to stop 'em. Slavery is wrong, Billy, if it ain't wrong nuthin' is. We've got to fight against its spreadin', and it's goin' to be a durable struggle. It don't make no difference who gits office or who don't. All that's important is keepin' on fightin'. Don't you worry if I ain't elected. The fight's goin' on."

Well, I thought that over a lot, and it was queer how calm I came to feel—calm and sure, just as you be about God and all that. And when he was defeated I didn't seem to mind—any more'n he did. There wa'n't hardly anybody could understand why he took it so easy, and he 'had to go around consolin' 'em an' stiffenin' 'em up and tellin' 'em as he had me, how it was a durable struggle—that's the word he always used—"durable." Always seemed to me it was exactly the word for it—something that wa'n't goin' to wear out.

Ever see Douglas after that? Yes, onct. One day after election he come in here, and after talkin' around a spell he says suddint:

"Billy, you supported Mr. Lincoln, didn't you?" And he looked me straight in the eye, kind, but meanin', to know from me. Well, you bet I'd liked to have lied, but that ain't the kind of a thing a man lies about.

"Yes, Mr. Douglas," I says, "I did. I had to. He had it right."

Well, sir, you never see the way he smiled at me. "That's all right, Billy," he says, "I understand," and then he grips my hand and turns on his heel and goes off with his head down.

Seemed to me I couldn't stand it. You see I'd always *loved* Little Dug, and I'd been proud of him. Lordy, sometimes when he'd come back from Washington in them old days and come in here, all dressed up and lookin' so handsome and great, and come up and put his arm around me and ask about Ma and Johnnie and how business was, I'll be blamed if I didn't git red as a girl, I was so pleased. I'd hurrahed for him and voted for him for years, and here I had gone back on him. It just made me sick.

I couldn't stand it to stay in the store, so I put on my hat and went home and told Ma. "I almost wisht I hadn't done it," I says, groanin'.

"William," Ma says, "you know well enough you couldn't have done nuthin' else. I don't understand these things none too well. 'Tain't a woman's business; but you done what you thought was right and you ain't no call to worry about doin' what you think is right." That's the way Ma always talks. You ought to know Ma.

Still there ain't no use denyin' it. I don't ever think about the last time I seen Little Dug without feelin' bad. I never could

be hard on him like some was for that Kansas-Nebraska bill. You see, fact was he thought he was doin' a fine thing when he got up that bill. He seen the South wa'n't satisfied, and he thought he'd fix up something to please 'em and keep 'em still a while—a kind of Daniel Webster he was tryin' to be, makin' a new compromise.

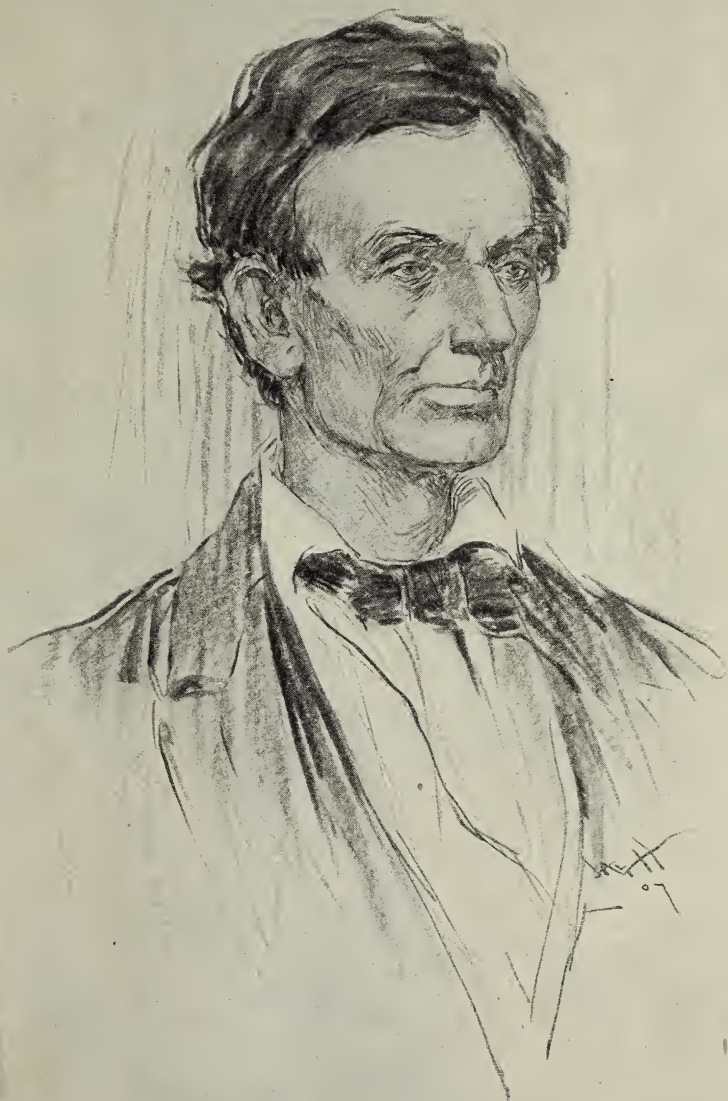
Douglas got so busy tryin' to please the South he clean lost sight of what the people was thinkin' back home. I reckon he wasn't countin' on us thinkin' at all—just took it for granted we'd believe what he told us, like we'd always done. Surprisin' how long you can fool people with the talk they was brought up on. Seems sometimes as if they hated to break in a new set of ideas as bad as they do new boots. I reckon that was what Douglas was countin' on back there in '58. But he got it wrong that time. He hadn't reckoned on what Abraham Lincoln had been doin', teachin' us to think, rousin' us to feel that slavery was wrong and dangerous, makin' us understand that it was more important for a country to do right than to git rich. Before he got through them debates, Douglas suspected it in my judgment. He knew that even if he did git to the Senate, Lincoln was the one that had come out ahead.

Queer how every day after that election it showed up more and more that Lincoln was ahead. Seemed sometimes as if everybody in the whole North was bent on hearin' him speak. Why, they sent for him to come to New York and Boston, and all the big men East got to writin' to him, and the first thing I knowed the boys was talkin' about his bein' president.

Well, I thought that was goin' a leetle far. Just as I told you t'other day, it seemed to me almost as if somebody was pokin' fun at him. He didn't seem to me to *look* like a president. Queer how long it takes a man to find out that there ain't anything in the world so important as honest thinkin' and actin', and that when you've found a man that never lets up 'til he sees clear and right, and then hangs on to what he sees like a dog to a root, you can't make a mistake in tyin' to him. You can trust him anywhere. Queer how long we are all taken in by high-soundin' talk and fashionable ways and fine promises. But don't you make no mistake, they ain't no show in the long run with honest thinkin'.



THE ENTRANCE OF LANCE DARLING



Drawn by Fay Hambridge

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Lots of 'em will tell you he was homely. Seems to me sometimes that's about all some folks around here has to tell about Abraham Lincoln. . . . Well, now, don't you make no mistake. . . . He wa'n't homely. There's no denying he was long and lean, and he didn't always stand straight and he wasn't pertikeler about his clothes, but that night up to Bloomington . . . I tell you he was the handsomest man I ever see—Page 8

